

The House of Representatives faced a fateful decision today when we voted on whether to establish a time-frame for ending the war in Iraq or to accept President Bush's open-ended commitment to a failed strategy.

I opposed President Bush's decision to invade Iraq, as I believed that a diplomatic solution was still possible. I voted against [authorizing the use of military force](#) against Iraq on October 10, 2002. As the war in Iraq has stretched out longer than our involvement in World War II, we have seen over 3,000 brave American soldiers killed and tens thousands more maimed, along with over [150,000 Iraqi civilians](#) [killed](#).

President Bush led our nation down the wrong path when he prematurely sent our troops into Iraq and now he is demanding a blank check to continue his failed policies in Iraq. While a Republican majority in Congress may have looked the other way as President Bush mismanaged the war in Iraq, the new Democratic majority is conducting vigorous oversight. In fact, we have already conducted over [97 hearings on issues related to the Iraq war](#).

It's time for accountability, as [I stated on the House Floor earlier today](#).

Several months ago [President Bush laid out benchmarks](#) for progress in Iraq, but he did not actually tie those benchmarks to any real consequences. Appropriations Committee Chairman David Obey and Congressman Jack Murtha crafted a bill that will put teeth into those benchmarks.

The bill we voted on today, the [U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Health and Iraq Accountability Act](#), holds the Bush Administration and the Iraqi government accountable and sets a responsible timeline for the phased redeployment of U.S. troops.

1. If the President fails to report to Congress progress on key security benchmarks by the Iraqi government by July 1, 2007, a redeployment of U.S. troops begins immediately and must be completed within 180 days.
2. If the President fails to certify that Iraq has met certain legislative benchmarks by October

1, 2007, a redeployment of U.S. troops begins immediately and must be completed within 180 days.

3. In any case, at the latest, a redeployment of U.S. troops from Iraq must begin by March 1, 2008 and must be completed by August 31, 2008.

While I would have preferred a more expedited process of redeploying our troops out of Iraq, I welcome this opportunity for the House to go on the record in support of a timeline for ending U.S. participation in Iraq's civil war. The Iraqi government must now step up to the plate and take responsibility for their own security. Keeping American troops in the middle of an Iraqi [civil war](#)

inflames the situation, and the majority of Iraqis believe that their security situation will improve after the withdrawal of foreign forces.

[The solution in Iraq is a political one](#) , not military. President Bush's tired old ideas of simply sending more troops into Iraq will not work, as the military commander in Iraq recently stated. The President's militaristic approach to the Middle East has been counterproductive, making us less secure than before. I believe we must engage in sustained diplomatic efforts, coupled with economic and civic programs, to combat the threats that we face. I am therefore pleased to tell you that [the House voted in favor of establishing a strategic timeline for redeployment from Iraq](#)

earlier today. America's relationships with our allies may have been weakened by our involvement in Iraq, but I believe that a new approach to foreign policy can allow us to solve the many challenges facing our nation.